

KEES Policy Issues Work Group Update

The KEES Policy Issues Work Group met twice since the December P-16 Council meeting and reviewed several proposals developing in part or directly from the work group's policy discussions (see attachment). The following four key policy changes and one new program have been proposed by the agencies represented on the work group:

- **Raising the State's Minimum High School Graduation Requirements.** At its February 1-2 meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education approved raising the state's minimum high school graduation requirements to go into effect in 2012 (see Agenda Item IV-B). While the new requirements do not completely match the Kentucky State Scholars Program, which formed the impetus for the KEES work group discussion, the proposed new requirements more closely align with Kentucky's pre-college curriculum and the KEES curriculum.

The goal of the KEES policy agenda is to develop a single curriculum that will meet high school graduation requirements, pre-college curricular requirements, and KEES eligibility requirements. The action taken by the KBE represents a significant step toward achieving this goal. The KBE approved strengthening the KEES curriculum, although it considered raising high school graduation requirements as a separate issue from the KEES curriculum. The KEES work group issues paper was initially drawn up for submission to the KBE to assist its deliberations.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance authority proposed the following changes to KEES legislation in HB 551:

- **Changing the high school KEES curriculum definition to refer to five "credits" rather than five "courses."** Currently, KEES statutes define the prerequisite "KEES curriculum" as five "courses" per year. Block scheduling at high schools permits many students to earn credits at a rate that meets graduation requirements but may not afford them time to take five courses. Changing the requirement of five "courses" to five "credits" provides administrative efficiencies and addresses a problem in tracking courses taken by KEES recipients.
- **Elimination of the age cap for adult learners receiving the ACT bonus award.** Currently, GED-earners must obtain a GED within five years following the year in which the GED recipient's high school class graduated in order to receive the supplemental award for ACT scores. The revision still will stipulate that eligibility for the KEES award will expire five years after the GED is obtained, just as it does for those who graduate from high school.
- **Raising the minimum threshold score for ACT bonus award eligibility from 15 to 18 on the ACT (or equivalent score on the SAT) beginning with students graduating on or after June 30, 2009 (i.e., freshman during the 2006-07 academic year).** Since Kentucky's public four-year higher education institutions require a minimum ACT of 18 (or SAT

equivalent) to avoid remediation and scores below 18 indicate a lack of preparedness for success at the postsecondary level, educational groups have expressed interest in raising the minimum score for the supplemental ACT KEES award.

- **Go Higher Grant Program.** KHEAA also is working with the Council on Postsecondary Education and Kentucky Adult Education to establish and implement a Go Higher Grant Program to assist independent students paying higher educational expenses.